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SUBJECT: FINLAND TO ANNOUNCE INCREASED AFGHANISTAN SUPPORT  
AT LONDON CONFERENCE

REF: 10 STATE 06355

Classified By: DCM Michael A. Butler for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) SUMMARY. At the London Conference Finland will announce its plans to increase its contributions to Afghanistan. On January 22 President Halonen and the Government decided to increase its military and civilian presence and to direct additional development assistance to the northern provinces. By early 2011 Finland should complete deployment of roughly an additional 50 troops, bringing the total to 195. Those troops likely will end up at the PRT in Mazar-i-Sharif, though the Government could consider additional troops to a possible Nordic OMLT. The Government will add two development positions in Afghanistan, and could increase from 24 to roughly 30 EUPOL trainers. It also will consider sending civilian advisors to UNAMA. The Government will confirm later whether it is re-directing existing funds to the north, or additional funds, and whether it will contribute to the Peace and Reintegration Trust Fund.  
END SUMMARY.

12. (SBU) In a January 25 meeting, Director for the MFA's Unit for Security Policy and Crisis Management told Pol-Econ Chief that at the January 28 London Conference the Government of Finland (GOF) would announce its plans to increase its contributions to Afghanistan. Kantola accepted reftel points, raising only his interest in the question of civilian structures within NATO, the EU and UN. Specifically, he wondered about whether plans to increase would substitute or supplement existing civilian offices in NATO and the EU. Regarding post-Lisbon EU organization, he assumed the Foreign Affairs Committee would discuss this on January 25, but he could not predict the outcome. Kantola said Finland is willing to consider providing a seconded advisor to NATO Senior Civilian Representative staff, and to UNAMA as well should the UN open secondments beyond military and police.

#### FINLAND INCREASES MILITARY CONTRIBUTIONS

13. (C) On January 22 the GOF announced its plan to increase its troop level from 145 to 195. Kantola pointed out that Finland's own announcement is confusing, as it refers to "approximately 50" additional troops while also describing 195 as a maximum. Prime Minister Vanhanen, when announcing the plan, referred to "roughly 200." Kantola said that the GOF wants to retain some flexibility on the number, but that the Parliament might insist on a hard ceiling. The GOF intends to deploy the troops through 2010, with all being in place by early 2011. Kantola could not provide any timetable for deployment, in part because the Finns await the results of German-Swedish decisions regarding the PRT in Mazar-i-Sharif. The Defense Ministry will clarify the

deployment timetable later.

14. (C) Kantola said most of the additional troops would go to the PRT, but could not say definitively all would go there. Of the outstanding 145 slots 30 are for OMLTs. Kantola held out the possibility of additional contributions to OMLTs, perhaps to a Nordic OMLT, but conceded that Finland still has empty slots to fill. He pointed out that the new GOF plan permits contributing to battalion-level OMLTs, adding that going down to the battalion level is the only way Finland would be able to fill outstanding positions.

15. (C) The GOF's announcement described the increase as "temporary." Kantola stated that "temporary" is not accurate, and struggled to find the correct English word to describe the GOF's decision; he said that the GOF's mandates are typically open-ended, and this is no different. However, it appears that an open-ended mandate for these additional troops was politically difficult, resulting in the explicit promise from the GOF that it would periodically re-visit its decision.

#### MORE CIVILIANS, PERHAPS MORE DEVELOPMENT FUNDING

16. (C) The GOF announced publicly that it would direct additional development funding for the northern provinces. Kantola could not confirm whether this meant additional development funding or a reapportionment of existing funds, but he suspected the latter. (NOTE: In a January 22 meeting an official with the MFA's European Security and Defense Policy Office told Poloff that Finland likely would focus more attention on agricultural development with a view to providing livelihoods to demobilized fighters. END NOTE.)

Nor could Kantola confirm a GOF contribution to the Peace and Reintegration Trust Fund. He said that the GOF would add two development positions in Afghanistan, one based in the Embassy and one in the PRT. The Embassy slot should be filled this Spring; Kantola could not say when the other might be filled. (NOTE: We had not received elaboration from the MFA's Afghanistan Office before the deadline. END NOTE.) Kantola also said that the decision whether to contribute more police trainers rested with himself. He had not decided yet, but thought it likely the GOF would increase, perhaps from 24 to approximately 30. He reiterated that Finland would also consider providing civilians to UNAMA, especially if they opened additional offices in the northern provinces.

#### PARLIAMENT TO DEBATE GOF PLAN

7 (C) According to Kantola, the GOF's plan could go before Parliament for debate and a vote as soon as the first week of February. The GOF does not need Parliament's approval for the increases: as Kantola noted, the decision on troops belonged to the President, and the EUPOL decision was effectively his. However, Kantola pointed to Parliament's negative view in 2008 of Finland's support for battalion-level OMLTs, which led to the GOF removing that option. He stated Parliament, or the Foreign Affairs Committee alone, could force the government to change its plan if it issued direct and blunt criticism.

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